Point Blank out-takes: articles drafted for issue 4 but not published…

Kings of Hamburger Alley: Bruce Springsteen & the E Street Band live at Frankfurt Festhalle, 14 April 1981

Bruce Springsteen began his show alone in a dim spotlight on a darkened stage. Against the slow pounding of a bass drum and a droning organ note, he intoned, trance-like, the words to 'Factory'. Immediately the scene was set: this was going to be *work* – the lights came on, the band played 'Prove It All Night', so earnest, so determined. No work without play: 'Out In The Street', coming alive like a different song from the album version, the audience sang 'oh-oh-oh-oh-oh!' Up on the piano for 'Tenth Avenue Freeze-Out', 'all alone' with the front row fans! Hardly a pause for breath before the change of pace with 'Darkness On The Edge Of Town', full of fire. Next, lights down again for Bruce in the spotlight doing an introduction to 'Independence Day'. He asked for quiet and Frankfurt obliged. He thanked them with the Creedence oldie, 'Who'll Stop The Rain', singing as if he were John Fogerty, the voice just right. Into top gear for 'Two Hearts'; a confirmation of faith: 'The Promised Land'. Quiet again for Woody Guthrie's 'This Land Is Your Land', a surprise in Europe, but as Bruce introduced it: 'a question rather than a statement'. To the end of the first set with an impassioned 'The River', 'Badlands' (with an unexpected piano intro by Roy Bittan) and 'Thunder Road', pulling out with the confidence to win.

Back with a vengeance for part two after a half-hour break: a long 'Cadillac Ranch', 'just one girl' to dance with for 'Sherry darling', and a sing-along 'Hungry Heart'. The dramatic bass opening to 'Fire', an exhilarating mini-opera tease by Clarence and Springsteen. 'You Can Look' (and dance), and then for the first time in Europe, 'Point Blank' – the peak of the show, with 'Racing In The Street' which followed. A transcendent guitar interplay between Bruce and Steve as the ending built with the band. Roy played the notes heralding 'Backstreets', a rare treat; a rocking 'Ramrod', 'Rosie' (of course) and then they were gone, but only for a moment. That adrenalin rush as the drums surge into 'Born To Run', and straight into a breathtaking 'Detroit Medley' without a pause, featuring extra segments ('Shout', for one). A second encore – another John Fogerty song, better known through Status Quo: 'Rockin' All Over The World'. A pleasant surprise, and an appropriate theme for the tour. Everyone could sing along on the 'I like it' choruses, whatever their nationality. A wise choice and a fitting end to a great three-hour show.

All aboard! The 'River' Tour comes to Europe: a summary

Bruce Springsteen began his European shows alone in a dim light on a dark stage: against a slow, mechanical drumbeat and monotone organ, he intoned the words to 'Factory' as if in a trance or stupor, as if re-enacting his father's deadening working life. In Paris he sang an unfamiliar song instead, apparently inspired by Elvis' 'Follow That Dream'. Springing into action, the band went to work on 'Prove It All Night' or #Badlands' to demonstrate the point. Joining work to play, 'Out In The Street' came alive as an audience participation number, the crowds singing 'oh-oh-oh-oh-oh' in the choruses. Bruce danced on the piano for 'Tenth Avenue Freeze-Out', 'all alone!' with the front row fans, breaking barriers. Hardly pausing, the band changed pace with 'Darkness On The Edge Of Town' before Springsteen returned to the spotlight in the dark for 'Independence Day'. He asked for quiet: the non-English-speaking element of the audiences obliged, and if they didn't always understand his introduction to the song, the spirit of his message

overcame any language barriers. At Munich, a child gave him flowers. Bruce thanked their patience with 'Who'll Stop The Rain', the John Fogerty song sounding like Springsteen's own. Into top gear with 'Two Hearts', and a solo by Miami Steve in 'The Promised Land', before quiet again for Woody Guthrie's 'This Land Is Your Land', seemingly an unlikely song for Europe, but as Springsteen introduced it, 'a question rather than a statement'. At Paris he quoted 'How Great Thou Art' and 'American Trilogy' as two of his favourite songs, and described how he'd been reading the history of the United States, and coming to terms with his heritage. The first set wound up with an impassioned 'The River', 'Badlands' with a deceptive piano intro by Roy Bittan, and 'Thunder Road', puling out with the confidence to win. The first night at Paris, when Bruce held out the microphone for the crowd to sing, he told them off jokingly: 'you need some practice!' and when they improved the next night: 'close!'

After the break the band returned with a vengeance for a lengthy 'Cadillac Ranch', the guitarists dancing in time; 'just one girl' (two at Munich!) to dance with for 'Sherry Darling'; and a sing-along 'Hungry Heart', non-stop bop. Then dimmed lights for the dramatic bass opening to 'Fire', an exhilarating mini-opera tease by the Big Man and the Boss, playing with a hilarious pause half-way. Full speed again for 'You Can Look', and the turning-point of the show: 'Wreck On The Highway' or 'Point Blank', followed by 'Racing In The Street', with stunningly effective lighting. (At Brussels, 'Stolen Car' was aired.) Finishing the lyrics, Bruce would walk into the shadows, strap on his guitar, and return for a transcendent interplay with Steve and the band, building with them to the climax. Roy Bittan's piano heralded the opening to 'Backstreets', and the home stretch continued with a rocking 'Ramrod', cleverly linked to 'Rosalita' of course ('come on out, everybody!').

At Paris, Bruce began the first encore with an Elvis ballad, 'Can't Help Falling In Love With You', his voice adapting impressively, before the drum surge of 'Born To Run', straight through and into an extended 'Detroit Medley', featuring 'Shout!' and snatches of 'High School Confidential' and others. Some nights he'd use 'I Hear A Train', with a roll-call of the stops on the tour, the audience whistling 'whoo-whoo!' to the prompt of 'all aboard!'. At Berlin they got 'Twist And Shout', at Paris 'Sweet Soul Music', and always the theme tune of the tour, John Fogerty's 'Rockin' All Over The World', an appropriate closer to which everyone could sing the 'I like it' choruses. 'The real future of rock'n'roll is about nine years old right now,' said Bruce.